

unfavorable ones. Under the program adopted by the House of Delegates the Association will undertake to develop a program designed for the utilization of the individual members and carry this program into the county medical societies through official visits by the top officers of the Association. Further announcements on this campaign will be made as plans attain greater maturity.

All members are urged to read and study the deliberations and decisions of the House of Delegates. This body is the representative law-making body of the Association, representing the membership as a whole, and its actions are binding on members, officers, and Councilors alike. The brief time needed to review the transcript of its sessions will constitute a worthwhile investment.

### **C.M.A. Special Session**

Plans have been made for a special session of the House of Delegates of the California Medical Association. The meeting will be held in Sacramento on December 2 and 3, 1950, together with simultaneous meetings of the Administrative Members of California Physicians' Service.

This meeting presages similar sessions to come. The proposed Constitution and By-laws of the Asso-

ciation, now lying on the table, contemplate the holding of two meetings annually of the House of Delegates; if these documents are adopted, the county medical society representatives may look forward to semi-annual meetings as a means of keeping the business of the Association up to date.

In years past the C.M.A. has had occasion several times to call special meetings of the House of Delegates. The last two such gatherings, in 1935 and 1945, were both called for the purpose of giving special attention to matters of health insurance, the 1945 session being directed at the proposals of Governor Earl Warren for compulsory health insurance legislation. Both meetings have attracted a full attendance and both have accomplished, in a short period of time, much more in the way of tangible results than the Delegates have been accustomed to in the annual sessions, where scientific gatherings and other events have tended to divert at least a part of the Delegates' attention.

Full details of the Special Session, along with the agenda, will be announced at a later date. Meanwhile, please mark the dates on your calendar. The business of the Association requires this meeting, and similar ones to come, and all Delegates should plan to be present and participate in the concentrated discussions which will be scheduled.



## ***Letters to the Editor . . .***

### **Scientists Have to Read Scientific Writing**

*Easy writing's curst hard reading—*

SHERIDAN

Advances in science are founded on what is already known. Scientists telling other scientists what advances they have made should presume a reasonable acquaintance with what is already known. The competition for readers' attention is so sharp that any one writer's quota is mighty small. He would do well to use what readers' attention he can get for just one purpose, namely: to get his message across. He will see that it is a short-sighted policy to use up any of his readers' attention for retelling what is already known. Yet we see many an essay, the first half of which is devoted to historical background and other scientists' false starts.

We were all medical students once, when we learned that success depended on convincing professors that we knew something. We were all struggling young practitioners once, and believed (rightly) that success depended on convincing our patients and our colleagues that we had a solid scientific foundation for our art. But when we undertake to write and talk, as clinical scientists, for the eyes and ears of other clinical scientists, we should show ourselves mature enough to refrain from the exhi-

bition of knowledge for the sake of its exhibition.

Let us therefore exhort our essayists to write sharply to the point. Let them design their structure with no waste floor space, dig to bedrock only under the rooms that carry weight, and buy no stone lions for the front stoop.

Those who write for CALIFORNIA MEDICINE can hope for 10,000 readers. Is it not simple economics to say: The essayist can well afford to spend 20 hours shortening and sharpening his presentation if his readers save a sum total of twice that time in reading it. Forty hours among 10,000 readers amounts to only 15 seconds each. Can one not by taking thought subtract a minute from the reading time?

Moreover, if the essay is short and full of graphic presentation, reader willingness will be correspondingly high. That is to say, if the thing looks half as long to read, four times as many men will read it. And after all, that's what you're after, isn't it, to get your ideas into the minds of your fellows? The figures are purely intuitional, but let every ambitious essayist submit them to his own intuition and see if he is not in at least "qualitative" agreement.

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